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Translanguaging in the EFL Classroom: Voices from Indonesian University Students

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Abstract:
Translanguaging has increasingly become an inseparable feature of English language teaching in Indonesia, shaped by students' diverse linguistic repertoires and educational backgrounds. Within this context, understanding how learners' previous language experiences influence their translanguaging practices is crucial. However, research examining translanguaging in relation to students' linguistic and demographic backgrounds was limited. Addressing this gap, the present study investigated how Indonesian university students employ translanguaging in their English learning processes and the purposes it serves. Adopting a qualitative research design, the study gathered data through surveys and semi-structured interviews with students drawn from multiple departments and academic cohorts. Demographic considerations, including participants' mastered languages and educational level, were also incorporated into the recruitment process. This approach enabled a more comprehensive account of how translanguaging operates in varied academic and personal contexts. The findings indicated that students engage in translanguaging primarily as they perceive certain attitudes towards the English-only and bilingual policies in the classroom. This study also found that students communicated using translanguaging due to the natural and contextual considerations based on the background of their peers, including culture and proficiency level. By foregrounding students' voices at the university level, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of translanguaging practices in Indonesian higher education. The findings offer implications for designing inclusive English pedagogy that acknowledges students' linguistic resources and leverages them to enhance engagement and equity by considering the cultural background inherent in Indonesia.
Keywords: EFL classroom, bilingual, demographic, translanguaging

1. INTRODUCTION

Translanguaging was first coined as *trawsiehtu*, referring to the practice of bilingualism, which consciously alters the language input (texts, explanations, etc.) and output (presentation, essay, etc.) (Williams, 1994). Although current studies closely connect it with multilingualism, it raises great concern when scholars in early development refer to it as the term 'bilingual' as a language added to another language, thereby perceiving those as two separate languages. The debate continued when (W. G. Lewis et al., 2013)argued that bilingualism serves as support from one language to another, which aims to leverage the understanding.

The incorporation of bilingualism is understood as a pivotal instrument to teach bilingual and/or multilingual speakers (García & Lin, 2016). Furthermore, this is corroborated by García

et al. (2022), who state that integrating the practice of bilingualism in the classroom is a strategic measure, not something impeding language learning. L1 (native language) is deemed as a supporting instrument to ensure that the L2 (target language) learning is achievable and mark the identity sharing, therefore, translanguaging might take place. This underpins that translanguaging binds and reinforces one language over others to increase the students' understanding of complex material and involvement in the language learning activity. This has been extensively studied in various studies (Anderson, 2018; Carstens, 2016; G. Lewis et al., 2012; Moody et al., 2019; Xiao & Lertlit, 2023)

In the pedagogical context, in spite of the increasing number of translanguaging practices as the new concept in EFL, its implementation in pedagogical approaches remains problematic. Some studies put forward this entailing issue due to a) the way the students set their boundaries on practicing translanguaging, particularly in socio-political factors rooted mainly in the nation's ideology (Rasman, 2018); b) excessive use of home languages, which may contaminate the development of second/foreign languages (Fang & Liu, 2020); c) misconceptions about how certain languages are more superior than others. These create the partition of whether students would choose to employ translanguaging or otherwise.

The implementation of translanguaging is motivated by different reasons. As investigated by Williams (1994), bilingual speakers would speak fluidly and dynamically between languages based on the activity, outcome, and conversational partner (interlocutor). He extends that this communication would reinforce the linguistic materials of students in the very same lesson, such as the translation into languages used in learning and communication. In the same vein, translanguaging serves as a scaffolding that will retain the newly acquired knowledge (Anderson, 2018; Thongwichit et al., 2025). This validates the situation in which students would implement the innate language when they are introduced to foreign instructions, thus allowing them to choose language repertoire selectively.

In learning other languages, translanguaging has been found practical by bilingual students (Loo et al., 2022; Moody et al., 2019). Additionally, as a making-meaning process, translanguaging would result in, but not be limited to, developing critical thinking learning (García et al., 2022; Okoye & Ambele, 2023) and producing information (Okoye & Ambele, 2023). Translanguaging also expands to (1) facilitate students' understanding of intricate content, (2) collect, process, evaluate, orchestrate, and probe information based on the text, as well as convince and explain it, and (3) experience the respect as part of the group (García et al., 2017). This is further ratified by other studies, positing reasons behind translanguaging by students such as enhancing engagement and collaborating with peers (Kwihangana, 2021), acquiring new intercultural communication skills (Ou et al., 2023), and facilitating minoritized-language speaker (Kao, 2023).

The practices of translanguaging progressed as the demand to teach in a more inclusive and equitable environment grew (Ooi & Abdul Aziz, 2022). Some research has underscored the importance of translanguaging in the classroom. In their quantitative study involving 182 participants, the findings underscore graduate students' perceptions of translanguaging in university and social settings (Moody et al., 2019). Students appraised translanguaging as an acceptable and natural practice. Students believed that translanguaging could help them acquire a new language, although some showed concern that it was also a sign of low language proficiency. This is supported by Canagarajah (2011) positing that translanguaging is a naturally manifested phenomenon, although he contested its teaching reliability. The use of translanguaging in social settings is further studied by Rasman (2018). He found that translanguaging by students in EFL settings suggested a purpose for social achievement. They attempted to make meaning in a group where multiple languages exist, therefore shifting from one code to another. However, the process costs students to view English as superior to their native language and construct a language hierarchy under the pretext of an ideal community.

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Moreover, the translanguaging implementation is also studied from the teachers' point. In learning ESP, specifically nursing students where technical terms are recurring, teachers employed translanguaging to explain, check comprehension, localise material, reinforce classroom instruction, and build class rapport (Sipayung et al., 2025). In other studies, its use highlights the facilitation to learn the target language (Nuemaihom et al., 2024), promote inclusiveness (Li, 2022), and content comprehension (Sah & Li, 2022).

Given the previous studies, to our knowledge, most of them seek to find the translanguaging implementation based on either teachers' or students' perception within limited to no demographic consideration. Therefore, the present study aims to find the practice of translanguaging in more diverse student backgrounds, especially at the university level. This research will uncover translanguaging practice among English learners coming from various demographics at the university level. Eventually, it is expected to provide insight into the university teachers how this practice will help the learning process and material delivery.

2. METHOD

Research Design

This study was employed using a qualitative approach with a case study design to investigate the extent to which translanguaging facilitates students' language learning and to examine the role of demographic factors in this process within an EFL context. A qualitative design was considered appropriate as it enables the exploration of social behaviours and problems in their natural settings while also capturing the representative perspectives of participants (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2016). The case study approach was further justified as it provides holistic and naturalistic methods for examining single or multiple phenomena.

The study was conducted through a survey and interviews. We analysed in a qualitative manner by correlating the survey percentage with the excerpts of respondents. The questionnaire items were adapted from Nuemaihom et al. (2024) and (Moody et al., 2019). Before distributing, the survey was validated by experts to ensure it was contextually acceptable. The distribution took a week, and, subsequently, selected respondents were further interviewed using a semi-structured method. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom, lasting 20-30 minutes.

Consent

Prior to participation, all respondents were provided informed consent and voluntarily completed the survey. For the interview stage, participants were additionally asked to indicate whether they agreed or declined to take part in the semi-structured interviews. We ensured that the data were used solely for research purposes by adhering to the participants' confidentiality and allowing them to use their initials or pseudonyms.

Participants

The study was conducted in Indonesia, with participants drawn from several universities comprising students across diverse programs, cohorts, and majors. A survey was administered to students who had previously taken or were currently enrolled in English courses at the university. A total of 208 students completed the survey. Of these, 15 responses were excluded because the respondents did not indicate English as the language they had learned or were learning, resulting in 175 valid responses. From this pool, 15 participants were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews to provide deeper insights into translanguaging practices. The demographics of the participants were displayed as follows:

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Table 1. Demographic information of participants (N=175)

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	89	50.9%
	Female	86	49.1%
Program	Undergraduate	99	56.6%
	Master	52	29.7%
	Diploma	19	10.9%
	Doctoral	5	2.9%
Age Range	< 20	77	44.0%
	20–25	53	30.3%
	26–30	24	13.7%
	31–35	11	6.3%
	36–40	5	2.9%
Cohort	Freshmen	66	37.7%
	Sophomore	50	28.6%
	Junior	27	15.4%
	Senior	3	1.7%
	Alumni	25	14.3%
	Others	4	2.3%
Language Mastery	1	31	17.7%
	2	83	47.4%
	3	52	29.7%
	>3	9	5.1%

In terms of sex, the distribution was relatively balanced, comprising 89 males (50.9%) and 86 females (49.1%)**.** Regarding the educational background, the majority of the participants were enrolled in the Undergraduate program (n = 99, 56.6%)**.** This was respectively followed by those pursuing Master's program (n = 52, 29.7%)**,** the Diploma program (n = 19, 10.9**%**), and the Doctoral program (n = 5, 2.9%)**.**

The vast majority of participants were <20 (n=77, 44%), and 20-25 (n=53, 30,3%) comes in second place. This is given that most of the participants are active university students, particularly undergraduates. The last three places were occupied by the age group of 26-30 (n=24, 13,7%), 31-35 (n=11, 6,3%), and 36-40 (n=5, 2,9%). These were mostly filled by those coming from Master's and Doctoral programs.

Instruments

Data were collected through two instruments: an online survey and semi-structured interviews. The use of multiple sources of evidence was intended to enhance the credibility and interpretability of the dataset (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2016). The survey contained both closed- and open-ended items to capture a broad range of responses. Semi-structured interviews were conducted further to probe participants' experiences and perspectives regarding translanguaging practices.

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Data Analysis

Data were analysed using thematic analysis following the procedures outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006). We engaged in iterative readings of the dataset to identify initial codes, which constituted the first stage of the analysis. Coding was followed by the generation of candidate themes, with careful consideration to ensure alignment with the study's objectives. Themes were then refined and reviewed to ensure their coherence and representativeness. The final phase involved constructing a report organised around the selected themes to address the research questions comprehensively.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the present study, following the application of the inclusion criteria, data from 175 eligible participants were analysed. The table below presents the survey questions along with the corresponding total responses for each item.

Table 2. Survey Item Analysis

No	Survey Item	Total and Percentage				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Totally disagree
1.	I am allowed to use their native language (L1) in the English classroom	30 (17.14%)	87 (49.71%)	28 (16%)	29 (16.57%)	1 (0.57%)
2.	The use of Indonesian or the mother tongue in the English classroom indicates that a person is not yet fluent in English	20 (11.43%)	76 (43.43%)	26 (14.86%)	42 (24%)	11 (6.29%)
3.	I am allowed to use Indonesian or my mother tongue to help my classmates in the English classroom	45 (25.71%)	112 (64%)	9 (5.14%)	9 (5.14%)	0
4.	I am allowed to use Indonesian or my mother tongue to understand the teacher's or lecturer's instructions in the English classroom	29 (16.57%)	103 (58.86%)	26 (14.86%)	16 (9.14%)	1 (0.57%)
5.	Using Indonesian or the mother tongue for translation is important, especially for students with lower English proficiency	63 (36%)	96 (54.86%)	10 (5.71%)	5 (2.86%)	1 (0.57%)
6.	The use of Indonesian or the mother tongue alongside English greatly helps me learn English	64 (36.57%)	96 (54.86%)	12 (6.86%)	3 (1.71%)	0
7.	The use of Indonesian or the mother tongue together	43 (24.57%)	119 (68%)	11 (6.29%)	2 (1.14%)	0

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	with English helps me communicate with other students					
8.	I am allowed to use Indonesian or my mother tongue to explain things that are not related to the lesson in the English classroom	35 (20%)	99 (56.57%)	19 (10.86%)	20 (11.43%)	2 (1.14%)
9.	Using Indonesian or the mother tongue in the English classroom is considered inappropriate	4 (2.29%)	31 (17.71%)	32 (18.29%)	80 (45.71%)	28 (16%)
10.	I use both Indonesian or my mother tongue and English in social settings	35 (20%)	105 (60%)	20 (11.43%)	13 (7.43%)	2 (1.14%)
11.	I am allowed to use Indonesian or my mother tongue when discussing in small groups in the English classroom	29 (16.57%)	102 (58.29%)	17 (9.71%)	25 (14.29%)	2 (1.14%)
12.	During classroom activities, I am allowed to use Indonesian or my mother tongue to respond, speak, exchange ideas, and explain in the English classroom	19 (10.86%)	80 (45.71%)	38 (21.71%)	35 (20%)	3 (1.71%)

Upon completing interviews, we categorised them into 2 (two) main indicators representing the research questions. Each indicator was synthesised into codes and themes, which will be further elaborated with supporting survey findings and interviews. We found that translanguaging is interrelated with attitudes towards using only English and being bilingual in English class and is a natural way of learning English in the classroom.

Table 3. Thematic Analysis

No	Interview indicator	Sample excerpt	Code	Theme
1.	Student translanguaging practices	"Not all students have a basic command of English." (SH)	Lack of proficiency, ineffective learning	Attitudes towards using only English and being bilingual in English class
		"Good if all students have a basic English level… if the majority do not, learning becomes less fluent." (GB)	Flexibility, habituation, and critical thinking exercise	
		"This approach is more flexible… students can directly	Language dependency, limited use of	

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		compare… risk: becoming too dependent on the first language." (EV)	Indonesian/mother tongue	
		"In my opinion, the use of Indonesian helps with initial understanding, but continuous use of English is more important to train the four skills." (JS)	Communication, comprehension, translation, localisation, and scaffolding	
2.	Translanguaging as a way of learning English	"When I use Indonesian as my mother tongue along with English, it just flows like that." (SC)	Realistic practice, transitional role	Translanguaging as a natural and contextual learning process
		"When the interlocutors share the same ethnic or regional background, students tend to switch back to their local language. However, when they come from different backgrounds or when a foreigner is present, students are more inclined to use English." (EV)	Cultural background of interlocutor, proficiency level	
		"It depends; if it is our own regional language, it can be useful, but if it is another regional language, it can hinder." (HR)	Familiarity, distractive yet insightful	

Attitudes Towards Using Only English and Being Bilingual in English Class

English-Only Classroom Policy

Regarding the use of the English-only policy in the EFL classroom, the data identified a salient positive attitude demonstrated by participants, that is, habituation. The monolingual approach is believed to be favoured, as it expands the learners' exposure to the target language. Each attitude reflects how the learners perceive that the exclusive use of English, without the intervention of L1, helps them achieve the goal of EFL learning. The subsequent sections explore each attitude with the supporting evidence through multi-layered data collected through the study.

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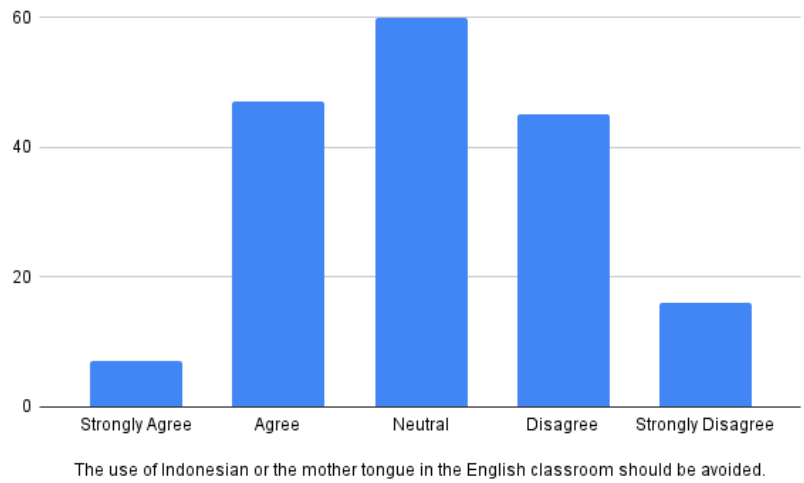

Figure 1. Students' Perceptions of Avoiding L1 Use in English Classrooms

The survey shows that the largest proportion of participants (n = 60, 34.3%) responded "Neutral," which tended to remain undecided or moderately supportive of the English-only policy in EFL. The highest number of Neutral responses indicates that the students depend on the context and purposes of whether L1 should be avoided or not, as indicated by the following excerpts:

> *"It depends on the purpose of the communication, L1 for the comprehension and initiative, while L2 for the foreign language practice." (SH)*

> *"The use of L1 helps with initial understanding, but continuous use of English is more important for developing the language skills." (EV)*

These underpin how the continuous implementation of English medium instruction makes the students indecisive. As they mostly stated that for EFL learning, using L2 only resulted in habituation. The idea of habituation is supported by Noprival et al. (2025)as a strategy of multilingual speakers in learning English. This finding corroborates Sah & Li's (2022) assertion that implementing English-medium instruction (EMI) while deliberately excluding the first language (L1) facilitates optimal exposure and immersion in the target language.

Bilingual Practice in the Classroom

The survey results revealed that nearly half of the students (49.7%, n=87) strongly agreed that bilingual practices in the EFL classroom are beneficial for their language learning. This is also supported by 17.1% (n=30) of the respondents who agreed with the flexible use of L1 and English during language learning. This finding suggests that learners perceive the use of both English and their first language (L1) as a supportive approach, particularly because not all students possess sufficient competence to rely solely on English during classroom interactions. As articulated by the following students,

> *"When both languages are used together, it helps learners comprehend complex contexts through Indonesian/their mother tongue." (GB)*

> *"English can be used in a non-dominant capacity. (DW)*

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This reinforces the idea that challenges the traditional view of using a monolingual approach that sees languages as separate entities. Employing the L1 as a bridge to comprehension serves as a supportive pedagogical tool (Salmerón, 2022; Yaqin et al., 2025) that validates the students' diverse backgrounds, rather than a substitution for the primary language of instruction, as illustrated in the excerpt.

> *"It is about flexibility, as not everyone is proficient in English; however, the use of English should still be prioritised in the classroom." (BS)*

> *"To facilitate communication among peers in the classroom, it is preferable to use Indonesian alongside English, since not all classmates are necessarily able to speak or understand English." (JS)*

Both students in the aforementioned excerpts reveal how multilingual learners negotiate linguistic hierarchy and inclusivity in EFL settings. It is depicted in the following figure.

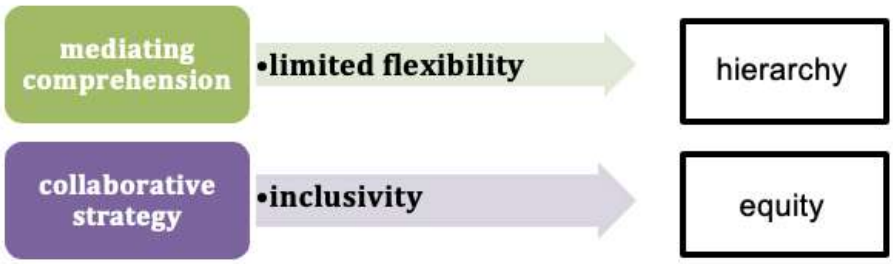

Figure 2. Multilingual speakers' viewpoints toward translanguaging

BS, proficient in Indonesian, English, and Javanese, values flexibility but maintains English as the primary medium of instruction, reflecting a stance that upholds English authority. BS reflects how Indonesian or Javanese mediates comprehension without undermining English authority (limited flexibility). Conversely, JS, who speaks Indonesian, English, Sundanese, and Korean, views translanguaging as a collaborative strategy that fosters clarity and collective understanding among peers. These contrasting orientations underscore the perceptions that alternating among languages is not merely switching languages, but it serves as the speakers' strategic efforts in avoiding communicative gaps across diverse proficiency levels (inclusivity).

Bilingual in EFL

As more than half of the total participants are multilingual speakers (n = 144, 82.2%), translanguaging has emerged as a prevalent discourse practice among bilingual and multilingual individuals in both academic contexts (e.g., classroom interactions, small-group discussions) and non-academic contexts (e.g., social communication). The findings indicate that 68% (n = 119) of the learners employ Indonesian or their mother tongue alongside English when communicating with peers. This serves as empirical evidence supporting the study undertaken by Collins & Cioè-Peña (2016) and Alasmari et al. (2022) regarding the fluidity of language use, particularly for bilinguals and multilinguals, that enhances learning. The following is derived from what the participants highlighted regarding the flexibility to translanguage in the lens of a multilingual speaker:

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> *"I agree with the implementation of usage rules that allow flexibility, as I myself, who constantly switches between English and Indonesian, feel that such practice enhances my learning experience. Through this process, I can suddenly recognise the structural differences between English and Indonesian, even though I use different sets of vocabulary in each language." (SL)*

The excerpt illustrates how multilingual speakers draw upon their multiple linguistic repertoires to mediate comprehension and guide cognitive processes within the EFL context. Studies conducted by scholars (Tai & Wei, 2021; Zhou et al., 2020) believe that translanguaging helps students to construct meaning in a more structured and reflective manner. Furthermore, the flexibility in language use exemplifies translanguaging practices that align with the boundary-free principle, allowing multilingual speakers to interact dynamically across the languages they command and EFL. Consequently, learners engage in dynamic transitions among home languages, school languages, and instructional languages. Acknowledging all different codes are used for linking the knowledge within all repertoires as highlighted by as surveyed (Duarte, 2020) by Raja et al. (2022).

These findings align with another finding, which discovers that translanguaging provides broader opportunities for less proficient L2 learners to develop their language competence, as more fluent peers bridge the linguistic gap through translanguaging practices. This interpretation is supported by survey results indicating that 64% (n = 112) of learners are permitted to use translanguaging to assist their classmates. Although 43.4% perceive translanguaging as a strategy primarily used by those who are not yet fluent, 24% of the respondents expressed a contrasting view, asserting that translanguaging facilitates a deeper understanding of complex and abstract concepts to facilitate learning comprehension. The findings aligned with the results of previous studies (Caldas, 2019; Memari, 2024) delve into the extent to which the students used translanguaging as a tool to comprehend, the following excerpt depicts the details:

> *"This occurs because comparing linguistic structures across languages can raise students' awareness of the differences between them." (EV)*

> *"The use of their mother tongue facilitates comprehension because it activates their prior knowledge." (DW)*

Both excerpts collectively illustrate the noticeable functions of translanguaging during the transition phase of language acquisition, where students rely on their L1 prior knowledge to comprehend the materials, as supported by most participants (54.86%). Moreover, the act of comparing linguistic structures as discovered by Ali (2024) across languages raises students' awareness of syntactic and semantic differences. It represents the localisation and translation functions of translanguaging. Through localisation, learners contextualise new or abstract English concepts within familiar linguistic frameworks, while translation allows them to bridge meaning between languages, supporting a more intuitive grasp of form–meaning relationships.

Translanguaging as Natural and Contextual Learning Processes

Translanguaging as Natural Practice

As bilingual and/or multilingual speakers, it is inevitable for students to switch between codes, despite being under the scrutiny of English teachers. They perceive that it is something innate in their way of communication. As aforementioned, students use their mother tongue because it helps to engage with other peers, lest they have any misunderstanding. According to the data pool, more than half of the sample (56.57%) agreed that the use of L1 is naturally ingrained when conveying their idea, and another 20% strongly agreed that it is a practical way

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of communication, even outside the English discourse. Moreover, it is extensively shown by the almost similar opinion that translanguaging is a means in social context as much as 60%, although a small portion (11.43% and 7.43%) disapproved of translanguaging should not be part of informal conversation in their collective conversation, as represented by the following excerpt.

> *"But if I can't explain it in English, it flows with a mixture of languages. So, if it's everyday language, I just mix three languages; just mix it up. It just comes out like that. I think that's what I usually do with friends when we're hanging out."* (MN)

Approximately 47.4% of the participants were proficient in two languages and actively used them in daily communication. This suggests that they are likely to integrate multiple languages in interaction to maintain communicative clarity and fluency. It also reinforces the notion that learners strategically draw on their existing linguistic resources to facilitate the acquisition of an additional language. MN affirmed that the use of her mother tongue, Indonesian, and English occurs unconsciously. She viewed translanguaging as a link that would help her peers understand the meaning while accepting the fact that they share the same cultural background. García et al. (2022) have framed that translanguaging takes place due to the commonality of cultural background. Further, as a circulated discourse, it is supported that translanguaging is a naturally occurring situation where students have a safe space to converse and deliver their ideas without boundaries (Canagarajah, 2011). Students believe that translanguaging occurs as a realistic communication mechanism, allowing them to be organically involved while concomitantly limiting the amount so as not to interfere with language learning. As instanced by one of the participants who has learned English for more than 10 years:

> *"I agree, because in everyday communication, bilingual speakers often use code-switching. It feels more realistic, natural, and aligned with students' social contexts, as I have also experienced." (EV)*

During this process, students also translanguage to improve their self-assurance in classroom activity and casual conversation with their peers, as shown in the following excerpt:

> *"The use of Indonesian and English in the English classroom, in my opinion, is a natural way to learn, as Indonesian can help students understand difficult concepts, bridge meanings, and make them feel more confident." (BP)*

In an EFL setting, students are encouraged to speak in L2; however, their ability is restrained to the extent that they cannot comfortably speak with only one language. Therefore, to overcome this issue, students could opt for codes that they are comfortable with. Our findings have been an underscoring discourse in translanguaging, which heavily affects student confidence levels in speaking or any relevant activities involving a foreign language. Studies (Mashala & Sanders, 2025; Ulum, 2024) specifically highlight this feature in their research. Students are more confident using translanguaging since they are heavily exposed to more diverse repertoires and environments, as well as more complex language skills. Further, this is endorsed by teachers who perceive student translanguaging, especially in their mother tongue or local languages, building their assertiveness in classroom activity, hence creating a supportive and inclusive environment.

Translanguaging as Contextual Practice

The survey extracted that 80 (45.71%) students did not agree that translanguaging is an inappropriate practice because 105 participants (60%) used it in their social communication, 102 (58.29%) reckoned that it is useful in small group discussion, and another 80 (45.71%)

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suggested that translanguaging be accepted as a way of responding in the classroom. As one of the participants admitted:

> *"It may have either positive or negative effects, depending on how the teacher uses and manages it. However, on the positive side, it allows us to build connections between local languages (and cultures) and English, which can sometimes accelerate the process of understanding."* (GB)

Further, BM added

> *"It's useful, language acculturation is really fascinating! It even allows us to develop new language varieties instead of using the same expressions over and over again."*

And BP asserted that

> *"Perhaps this can serve as a point where we can learn local languages together while also keeping the opportunity open for us to learn English from one another."*

Students perceive that the use of their mother tongue in the classroom enables them to coexist harmoniously with the dominant culture, thereby facilitating a deeper comprehension of classroom discourse, interactions, and learning materials through more meaningful connections with both peers and teachers. Research conducted by Yuzlu & Dikilitas (2022) as well as Kırkgöz et al. (2023) highlights that translanguaging helps learners establish meaningful links between their first language and English. This process contributes to a more profound grasp of linguistic patterns and fosters overall language proficiency. Such outcomes are consistent with the dynamic model of multilingualism, which posits that the strategic integration of multiple languages can enrich learning experiences and promote academic success (Kencana et al., 2025; Ulum, 2024;Suramto et al., 2024).

Additionally, this finding concurs with the notion that a combination of languages in the classroom will encourage a positive attitude toward English, especially in EFL, where English makes contact with local languages (J. Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; Sipayung et al., 2025). The use of local languages should be acknowledged as a valuable pedagogical resource that facilitates effective communication between teachers and students. However, such practices have raised concerns regarding their potential to impede second language acquisition. Despite these benefits, challenges persist, particularly the risk of excessive reliance on the first language and the possibility of cross-linguistic interference that may affect target language development.

Furthermore, the linguistic background of their interlocutors influences their choice to use the mother tongue, Indonesian, or English, depending on their level of proficiency and familiarity with the selected language. This tendency is illustrated in the following extract.

> *"If there are members in the discussion group who come from different regions or speak different local languages, I would choose to use Indonesian. However, if everyone in the group is from the same region. For example, (if) all are fluent in Javanese, I would use Javanese instead to create a more relaxed and comfortable atmosphere for discussion."* (HD)

GB also concluded that,

> *"Perhaps yes. The ethnicity or cultural background of the interlocutor may influence the choice of language used in the context of language learning, particularly during discussions or interactions in English classes. However, this influence depends on several factors, such as learning objectives, language proficiency, and the nature of the interaction."*

This linguistic choice is influenced by students' perception that their interlocutors should be able to respond appropriately and comprehend the intended meaning, including instances of

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humor, within classroom interactions. To facilitate mutual understanding, students therefore tend to use a language that is accessible to all participants. However, limited English proficiency may impede effective communication, often compelling students to reinterpret or retranslate their intended messages. Consequently, translanguaging emerges as a strategic alternative to enhance communicative efficiency and minimise potential misunderstandings among learners.

This result is supported by a previous study (T. Lewis & Kan, 2021) that found learners appeared to acquire multi-word and multi-character expressions from one another's cultures, and those who consistently engaged in the tasks demonstrated observable linguistic improvement. This progress fostered a deeper understanding of cultural practices and enhanced their ability to interact effectively with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. In addition, Yuzlu & Dikilitas (2022) investigated the role of translanguaging in developing the foreign language abilities of EFL learners in the Turkish context. Their findings indicate that allowing students to draw upon their full linguistic repertoire, including their first language, promotes deeper understanding and greater engagement in the process of learning English. This study is especially significant as it offers empirical evidence from Turkey, emphasising the distinctive advantages of translanguaging in improving learners' language proficiency and enriching their overall learning experience.

Taken together, these findings underscore the pedagogical value of translanguaging as a means of fostering both linguistic and cultural competence among EFL learners. By utilising their complete linguistic repertoire, students are able to construct a deeper understanding and participate more meaningfully in language learning processes. The integration of cultural knowledge through translanguaging also enhances learners' intercultural awareness and communicative adaptability. Empirical evidence from the previous studies further validates its effectiveness in promoting language development and classroom engagement. Therefore, translanguaging can be regarded as a transformative approach that bridges linguistic diversity and pedagogical innovation in multilingual learning contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

The present study underscores translanguaging as a natural and pedagogically valuable practice that facilitates both linguistic and cultural development among EFL learners in multilingual environments. The findings reveal that allowing students to draw upon their full linguistic repertoires, spanning local languages, Indonesian, and English, enhances comprehension, engagement, and confidence in classroom interactions. Translanguaging not only bridges linguistic gaps but also affirms students' cultural identities, creating an inclusive learning atmosphere that values linguistic diversity. Moreover, this study demonstrates that learners' choice of language is contextually driven, shaped by factors such as interlocutors' linguistic backgrounds, learning goals, and proficiency levels. Collectively, these insights affirm that translanguaging contributes significantly to language acquisition, intercultural understanding, and the overall effectiveness of EFL instruction.

Future studies are encouraged to explore translanguaging across broader educational settings with varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds to understand its dynamic role in shaping learner identity and communicative competence. Additionally, underlying issues in Indonesia, such as different local languages, humours, previous education, and family background that may or may not hinder language learning, should be specifically addressed, given that these have never been seriously addressed. Ultimately, examining translanguaging through a culturally responsive lens will enrich the discourse on multilingual education and promote equitable, context-sensitive language learning practices in culturally rich societies.

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